

NEWS *from*



Bill Postmus
Supervisor, First District

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Contact: Brad Mitzelfelt
(909) 387-4830

SUPERVISORS REACT TO WRIGHTWOOD WATER SHORTAGE

Local Emergency Declaration, Supplemental Water Supply Approved

SAN BERNARDINO—The San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors today declared that a local state of emergency exists as a result of a serious water shortage in the mountain community of Wrightwood.

Citing fire safety and health concerns, First District Supervisor Bill Postmus—who represents the Wrightwood area—brought an emergency resolution to the Board of Supervisors to be added to the Board Agenda. This action required a unanimous vote of the four supervisors present at the meeting. Third District Supervisor Dennis Hansberger was absent.

“My office discovered early Friday that some residents of Wrightwood were without water,” Postmus said. “After my staff notified the Fire Department it was soon discovered that there wasn’t enough water available to fire hydrants in parts of town in case of a fire. This is a very serious problem to have during such an extreme fire season. I’m also concerned about potential health risks in case there is siphonage or backflows in the water system.”

Wrightwood’s water service is provided by the Southern California Water Company, a private company regulated by the Public Utilities Commission. The company serves approximately 2,600 water customers in the unincorporated community of about 4,300 residents.

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Postmus said the normal water usage in Wrightwood is about 1,000 gallons per minute. For apparently unknown reasons, production levels of the wells in Wrightwood dropped to 800 gallons per minute early in July, and now the level has unexpectedly dropped to 500 gallons per minute. He said the water shortage has apparently been caused by drought and by what the water company refers to as an unexpected, unprecedented and sudden drop in the water table.

Postmus attended a community meeting in Wrightwood Monday night along with several hundred residents during which the water company outlined the causes of the shortage as well as what is being done about it. A representative of the company was present at today's Board meeting.

"The need for this proclamation of an emergency situation became clear over the weekend when I was informed that the water company ran into problems acquiring water to bring in by truck to help replenish the reservoir there," Postmus said. Supplemental water is currently being provided by the Hesperia Water District and the Sheep Creek Mutual Water Company.

With the adoption of the emergency proclamation today the Board of Supervisors also authorized County Service Area 70, Zone "L"—a special district governed by the Board of Supervisors—to sell supplemental water to the Southern California Water Company for Wrightwood during this emergency situation.

Postmus said he was further convinced that an emergency declaration was necessary over the weekend when the U.S. Forest Service, because of environmental concerns, shut down one of its wells that had been turned on in response to the shortage.

"I hope that the existence of this proclaimed state of emergency will help the water company and the county to be better able to deal with various agencies and bureaucratic red tape," Postmus said.

The resolution adopted today also requests that the Governor declare an emergency for San Bernardino County so that state resources, including potentially the National Guard in extreme circumstances, could potentially be made available to transport water in the unlikely event that it becomes necessary.

Postmus' motion to approve the emergency declaration included direction to the County's Special Districts Department and County Counsel to continue to review the County's franchise agreement with the Southern California Water Company to determine whether the company has adhered to the franchise requirements.